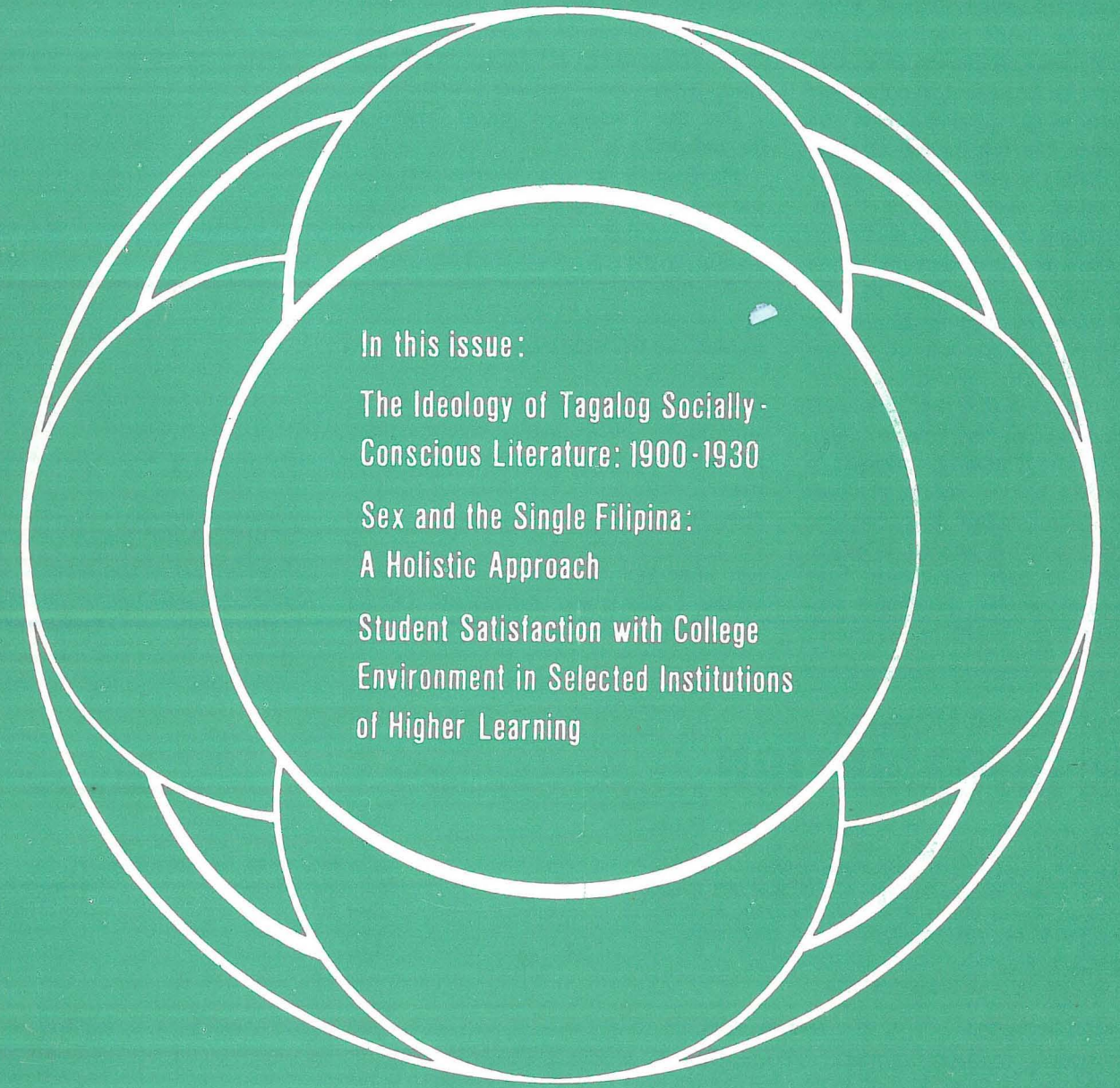


PS LIBRARY  
91

Volume VI No. 1  
Quezon City, Philippines  
April - June 1978  
ISSN 0115-1169



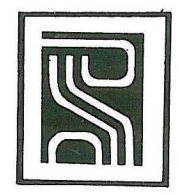
# Social Science **INFORMATION**



In this issue:

- The Ideology of Tagalog Socially-Conscious Literature: 1900-1930
- Sex and the Single Filipina: A Holistic Approach
- Student Satisfaction with College Environment in Selected Institutions of Higher Learning

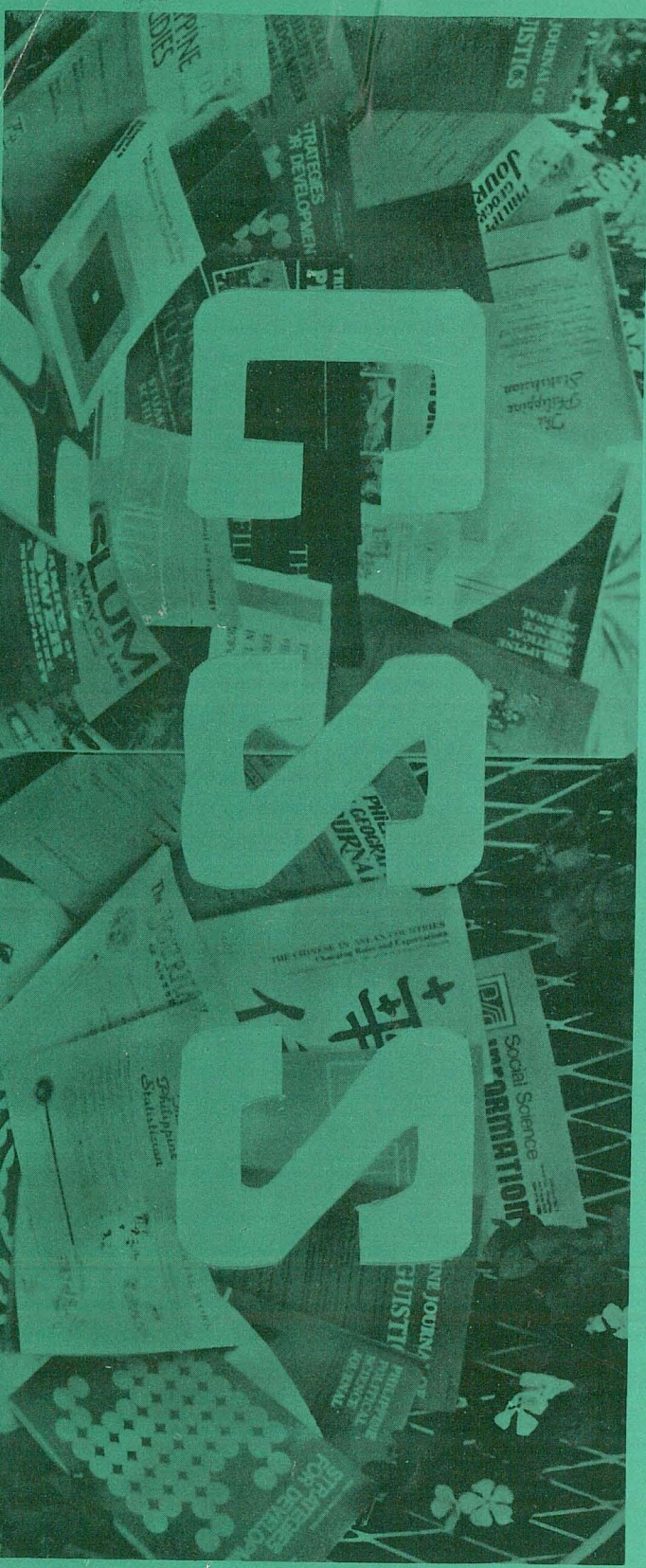
This is your copy of



Social Science  
**INFORMATION**

Philippine Social Science Council  
P.O. Box 655 Greenhills, Rizal 3113

May be opened for postal inspection



CENTRAL SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE  
House #7, Purok Aguinaldo  
University of the Philippines  
Diliman, Quezon City  
Tel. Nos. 978741, 976061 loc. 735  
P.O. Box 655, Greenhills, Metro Manila 3113

# EDITORIAL

## The Flip-Flop Power of the Press Release: The Case of the Tao't Bato

FRANK LYNCH, S. J.

Discipline Representative for Anthropology  
PSSC Executive Board



When the phone rang I was far gone, but not completely asleep. So it was not too difficult to locate the source of the sound and pick it up. What came through to me was that the person on the line was a newspaper man with a deadline and some questions.

He had been furnished a press release about a newly-discovered Filipino group identified as the Tao't bato, or "stone people," of Palawan. It looked as though the item might be important, like the news of the Tasaday in 1971, but he couldn't be sure. In matters like this he had no way, himself, of telling a press release from a put-on, so would I help? I'd try, I said.

The ethnographic contents of the release were those we all read in the Manila dailies the next morning, May 16. The Tao't bato were reported as 30 families living in caves "carved out of vertical cliffs" surrounding the "mile-wide crater of an extinct volcano in Ransang." (Ransang is a barrio of Quezon, the Palawan municipality in which in 1962 Dr. Robert B. Fox discovered the upper Pleistocene fossil remains of Tabon man.) The men and women wore barkcloth apparel (g-strings, tapis), beads, and other ornaments. They planted cassava, camote, and similar root crops in fields 1000 feet below the crater's

rim. Fire was made by the use of flint and tinder, dried moss in particular. A picture caption referred to the Tao't bato as possible descendants of Tabon man.

The caller wanted answers to three questions: first, were the people really previously unknown? second, were they likely descendants of Tabon man? and third, were they genuine "primitives" — like the Tasaday of South Cotabato, for example?

My first reaction was defensive. Palawan was not my turf, I said. Call Bob Fox, or Carlos Fernandez, or Jim Eder, or Eric Casiño, or the Macdonalds — but not me.

But they were all out of the country or out of town and unavailable, the caller replied, and this was urgent.

Remembering that Jesus Peralta, curator of the National Museum's division of anthropology, was mentioned in the news release, I fell back to a second line of defense. "Look, Jess Peralta is a highly competent, experienced Stateside-trained Ph. D. in anthropology. If he says it, you can print it." Satisfied with this master stroke, I was ready to hang up. "That's the problem," said the caller "I'm not sure

how much of this release is his; I can't figure out where the publicity ends and Peralta begins. And we can't get through to Dr. Peralta. He's in Palawan." The reporter had a point, and now I had a problem.

At my request, he read the release again, more slowly, and I concentrated as well as I could at that hour of the night.

Were the Tao't bato previously unknown? Put that way, the question had (and has) little meaning, in my opinion, but I went along with it. I recalled that Bob Fox had written that two or more Palawan groups lived seasonally in caves. Maybe this was one of them. The passage I referred to was from an article Fox published in the book edited by Yen and Nance, *Further Studies on the Tasaday* (1976). The quotation would appear in a follow-up article on the Tao't bato two days later (May 18) and be clarified in a subsequent release (May 31), in which Fox would be quoted as saying this was *not* one of the groups he had referred to. To some extent, the question was answered by later

*Continued on page 17*



## Social Science INFORMATION

A quarterly newsletter published by the PHILIPPINE SOCIAL SCIENCE COUNCIL, INC. (PSSC) with offices at House No. 7, Purok: Heneral Aguinaldo, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines. P.O. Box 655 Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila 3113 Phil. Tel. Nos. 97-87-41, 97-26-71, 97-60-61 loc. 735. Subscription: P15, US\$8/year.

Editorial: Leni S. Diaz  
Circulation: Sylvia V. Tan, Elvira C. Sevilla

PCPM SP No. 315

Member: PAPI

The PSSC SOCIAL SCIENCE INFORMATION primarily seeks to serve as a clearinghouse for the exchange of information, documentation, research activities, and news on people involved in the social sciences. Since 1973, it has endeavoured to be a regular and comprehensive inventory of information and a catalyst of discussion.

Unless so indicated, the views expressed by the authors of feature articles in this publication do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Philippine Social Science Council.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED: To quote from an article in this publication, proper acknowledgment should be given to the name of the publication, date, and volume no.

### 1978 Executive Board

Gabriel U. Iglesias, Chairman	Frank Lynch, S.J.
Vicente R. Jayme, Vice-Chairman	Natividad J. Munarriz
Alberto V. Ampil, Secretary-Treasurer	Cristina P. Párel
Caridad S. Alfonso	Dominador Z. Rosell
Gelia T. Castillo	Bonifacio P. Sibayan
Mercedes B. Concepcion	
Rosita L. Fondevilla	
Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr.	
Loretta Makaslar Sicat, Executive Director	
Vicente B. Valdepeñas, Jr., Immediate past chairman	

## THE FLIP-FLOP POWER OF THE PRESS RELEASE

*Continued from page 2*

news bulletins which reported the Tao't bato's trade relationships with adjacent groups. They were previously known to others, to be sure, though perhaps not directly to anthropologists or other visitors.

Were they likely to be related to Tabon man and his contemporaries? Well, let's see, I said. Tabon man lived about 23,000 years ago, during the Pleistocene. That's a lot of generations, and possibly a lot of moving around in between. Think of parallels. Are today's people of Central Java to be taken as the offspring of Pithecanthropus just because *he* was found nearby? More facetiously still, should elephants in the Manila Zoo be traced to the Pleistocene elephants whose remains are found in Rizal and Batangas? Connections of this kind, even if they are not overruled by particular historical evidence (knowing where today's Manila Zoo elephants actually come from for example), are at most doubtful, unproven, and unprovable. The photos that appeared in the newspapers next morning would furnish more clearly negative evidence: the Tao't bato seemed physically to be variety of Malay, or southern Mongoloid; Tabon man was apparently an Australoid type.

Finally, were the Tao't bato "primitives"? That word has many meanings, I said, but at least this is clear from the few details found in the first press release: this Palawan group and the Tasaday of South Cotabato are very different from each other. The Tao't bato are planters: the Tasaday are not. They are, in a sense, in two different worlds, that of food producers, on the one hand, and food gatherers, on the other. Subsequent newspaper articles (May 19 and June 16) would confirm the technological superiority of the Tao't bato, whose accomplishments include swidden (kaingin) multi-cropping, advanced hunting techniques, pottery-making and the construction (with bolos) of raised house platforms, walls, and roofs inside their caves. Their cosmology and religious beliefs are apparently very simple, but have much more content than those of the Tasaday. They also have the jew's harp, a two-stringed guitar, and a repertoire of at least 14 melodies. The article by Alberto T. Rous (Times Journal).

*Continued on page 30*



*Dr. John Bresnan of Ford Foundation, New York, Dr. Peter Geithner, Ford Foundation, Bangkok and Dr. Ozzie G. Simmons, Ford Foundation, Manila met with several members of the PSSC Executive Board to discuss the future plans and perspectives of the Philippine Social Science Council. The meeting was held at the PSSC Conference Room, May 16, 1978.*

*The PSSC Board members present were: Dr. Gabriel U. Iglesias, Dr. Bonifacio P. Sibayan, Dr. Caridad S. Alfonso, Dr. Cristina P. Parel, Dr. Marcelino A. Foronda, Prof. Dqminador Z. Rosell, and Dr. Loretta Makasiar Sicat. Also present was Ms. Pilar Ramos Jimenez, PSSC Program Coordinator.*

sources.

*Josefina R. Bugayong.* Dept. of Agrarian Reform. SSRI. UP. Dept. of Agrarian Reform.

*Gloria C. Cagalingan.* Dept. of Agrarian Reform. SSRI. UP. Dept. of Agrarian Reform.

*Naomi N. Capinpin.* Dept. of Agrarian Reform. SSRI. UP. Dept. of Agrarian Reform.

*Augusto Ma. Cinco, Jr.* National Food and Agriculture Council. SSRI. UP. National Food and Agriculture Council.

*Cecilia C. Distor.* Dept. of Agrarian Reform. SSRI. UP. Dept. of Agrarian Reform.

*Nenita Estrellado.* Regional Science Teaching Center, Ateneo de Davao. Teacher development program in the United States. Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California at Berkeley. Fulbright-Hays.

*Gloria J. Fabia.* Dept. of Agrarian Reform. SSRI. UP. Dept. of Agrarian Reform.

*Columba Flores.* St. Ferdinand College, Ilagan, Isabela. RCCT. University of the Philippines. FAPE-PSSC.

*Filomena G. Gante.* Dept. of Natural Resources. SSRI. UP. Dept. of Natural Resources.

*Heidi K. Gloria.* Ateneo de Davao. RCCT. University of the Philippines. FAPE-PSSC.

*Celine Goco.* Philippine Coconut Authority. SSRI. UP. Philippine Coconut Authority.

*Lynn T. Guasa.* Visayan State College of Agriculture. RCCT. University of the Philippines. Visayan State College of Agriculture.

*Ricardo O. Hermosura.* Dept. of Agrarian Reform. SSRI. UP. Dept. of Agrarian Reform.

*Erlinda C. Hisug.* Notre Dame of Marbel

College, Koronadal, South Cotabato. RCCT. University of the Philippines. FAPE-PSSC.

*Rizal C. Javier.* Mariano Marcos Memorial College of Science and Technology. RCCT. University of the Philippines. Mariano Marcos Memorial College of Science and Technology.

*Milagros R. Laforteza.* National Food and Agriculture Council. SSRI. UP. National Food and Agriculture Council.

*Josefina Lledo.* Ateneo de Zamboanga.

RCCT. University of the Philippines. FAPE-PSSC.

*Fe A. Longalong.* Dept. of Natural Resources. SSRI. UP. Dept. of Natural Resources.

*Hermes O. Lorica.* Bureau of Agricultural Economics. SSRI. UP. Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

*Norma Malilay.* Divine Word College of San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. RCCT. University of the Philippines. FAPE-PSSC.

## THE FLIP-FLOP POWER OF THE PRESS RELEASE

*Continued from page 17*

June 16, 1978) begins this inventory with the lead sentence, "The Tao't bato . . . are not Stone-Age people but people who use metals and practice agriculture. Dr. Jesus Peralta . . . made this clarification yesterday as he revealed exciting new findings about the Tao't bato . . ." Additional corrections made in this article are the number of Tao't bato families (20, not 30; 84 individuals in all), and their habitat ("Contrary to earlier reports, the Tao't bato do not live inside a dead volcano's crater but in a limestone bowl on the sides of which are found seven caves").

But, to return to the night of May 15, when I had made the distinction between planters (Tao't bato) and gatherers (Tasaday), and the vast cultural difference this implied, my caller was apparently satisfied. He had enough to go on, he said, at least for the next morning's deadline. He now needed time to understand, not just the original news release, but the notes he had made on my comments, such as they were. Poor man, he thanked me and hung up.

But I sat there, feeling — very uneasy. Searching for the reason why, I traced it finally to this: I was appalled and frightened by a situation in which both a conscientious reporter and a trained professional felt they had no guarantee of the accuracy or honesty of a public news bulletin on a matter of national consequence. "That's the problem," the reporter had said, "I can't figure out where the publicity ends and Peralta begins."

Peralta — pure Peralta — began quite late. Only with the Rous article of June 16

(one month after the first announcement of the 'discovery') did we have a chance to read an unexpurgated summary description of the Tao't bato (not 'stone people,' by the way, but 'stone/rock dwellers'; like Tagalog, 'river dwellers'). The early bulletins and follow-up stories, which portray these people as far less culturally endowed than they are, and hint broadly at stone-age connections, are traceable in substance and fervor, not to Peralta, but to publicity people who unfortunately claimed too much too soon, in vain and to our common shame.

The press release is a powerful thing, especially where its contents cannot be publicly challenged. But it has built into it a lethal protective device against its own misapplication. When it is flagrantly abused — made the channel, for example, of some premature or pretentious report — it will turn on its authors and do them in. This is the flip-flop, pro-con, hot-cold power of the press release. A good friend, a mortal enemy.

Especially where the topic is a newly-noted people such as the Tao't bato or the Tasaday, professional care, competence, and caution must moderate the content and timing of the releases that will appear. For unless this instrument of information and its privileged wielders are subject to control of this kind, it is predictable that ill-informed enthusiasm, misplaced national pride, or a compulsive bent for the sensational will write what the world will read. The press release will backfire, and Filipinos will be made a laughing-stock. In the long run (and even in the short), revisionist ethnography, like revisionist history and prehistory, will always make a bad copy.